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TAGS: [PREL](#) [AORC](#) [ECON](#) [UNGA](#) [CA](#)  
SUBJECT: UNGA: UN PASSES 18TH ANNUAL RESOLUTION AGAINST THE  
CUBAN EMBARGO

REF: A. STATE 110442  
[1](#)B. 08 USUN 997

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY: In plenary session on October 28, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) passed its 18th annual resolution condemning the United States economic and commercial embargo on Cuba. The Foreign Minister of Cuba delivered a hostile, cold-war style intervention, blaming the United States for preventing children from receiving proper medical care, referring to the embargo as genocide, and noting that the U.S. administration has not yet lived up to its commitment to change its foreign policy stance. Ambassador Rice delivered remarks for the United States, rejecting the genocide charge as an egregious misuse of the term that diminished the real suffering of genocide victims. She urged the Cuban leadership to extend freedoms to its people and pointed out efforts made to assist the Cuban people under the new administration. A host of countries including Libya, Mexico, and India commended the U.S. for its easing of restrictions. The final vote count was nearly identical to the previous year: 187 for, 3 against, and 2 abstentions. Only Israel and Palau joined the United States in voting against the resolution. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (U) SPEAKERS LIST: The following countries 19 countries delivered interventions: Sudan, Egypt, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Mexico, China, India, Vietnam, Indonesia, Brazil, Algeria, South Africa, Zambia, Venezuela, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Gambia, Brazil, the Russian Federation, Iran, and Cuba. Sixteen countries delivered an explanation of vote: the United States, Congo, Nicaragua, Sweden, Uruguay, Laos, Bolivia, Ghana, the Solomon Islands, Syria, Libya, Norway, Uganda, Benin, Belarus, and Tanzania. Cuba delivered the only right of reply.

[1](#)3. (U) RESOLUTION PASSES IN A TIME-HONORED LANDSLIDE: With 192 votes cast, 187 countries voted for the draft resolution A/64/L.4. Three countries voted against the resolution: the United States, Israel, and Palau. Two countries abstained: the Marshall Islands and Micronesia. The vote on the similar resolution in 2008 was nearly identical, with El Salvador and Iraq voting for the resolution this year, whereas last year the two countries were absent (Reftel A). A similar resolution has passed for the last 18 years with vote counts similar to the one observed in 2009. The announcement that the resolution had been adopted was met by considerable applause, many countries congratulating Cuba's delegation in person even as the session continued.

[1](#)4. (U) ADOPTED RESOLUTION URGES STATES TO REPEAL EMBARGO LAWS: The text of draft resolution A/64/L.4 reaffirms "the

sovereign equality of States, non-intervention, and non-interference" and recalls "the need to eliminate unilateral application of economic and trade measures by one State against another." The resolution expressed concern that further measures "aimed at strengthening and extending the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba continue to be promulgated." It urges states "that have and continue to apply such laws and measures to take the necessary steps to repeal or invalidate them" and requests that the Secretary-General prepare a report on the implementation of the resolution.

15. (U) CUBAN FOREIGN MINISTER CALLS THE EMBARGO GENOCIDE: Minister for Foreign Affairs Bruno Rodriguez opened his speech by sharing examples of children, severely ill from heart defects and cancer, allegedly unable to get the medical care they needed, with the claim that the U.S. embargo prevents key medicines and supplies from entering Cuba. Rodriguez registered his dissatisfaction with the new administration, noting that "Since the election of President Obama, there has not been any change in the implementation of the economic, commercial, and financial blockade against Cuba." He contended that U.S. efforts to "dismantle the most brutal restrictions" are "positive, but they are extremely limited and insufficient." He called the embargo "a mass, flagrant and systematic violation of human rights" and said that it meets the 1948 Geneva Convention definition of genocide. The FM complained about restrictions placed on humanitarian aid, the application of the embargo on foreign companies attempting to sell goods in Cuba, the inability of U.S. businesses and tourists to enter the country, and restrictions placed on access to information and

telecommunications networks.

16. (U) COUNTRIES RALLY TO CONDEMN EMBARGO: Dozens of countries spoke forcefully against the ill-effects of the embargo, several imploring the United States to move forward in its new direction and lift the embargo. Egypt, speaking on behalf of the non-aligned movement, claimed that the embargo causes a "huge material loss and economic and financial damage that has negatively impacted the welfare and well being of the people of Cuba." Sudan, speaking on behalf of the G77 and China, urged the U.S. to "fully adhere to the principles of mutual respect and non-interference in the internal affairs of a sisterly country." Nicaragua said that the embargo is a flagrant violation of human rights and assured delegates that Cuba will "continue to enlighten us with its wisdom." Bolivia commented on President Obama's recent selection for a Nobel Peace Prize and suggested that a new period of cooperation to include ending the embargo would be fitting with the award. At the close of the session, President of the General Assembly Ali Treki embraced the resolution, noting his "hope that the appeals addressed here will be heard and implemented by all of us."

17. (U) CONSIDERABLE PRAISE FOR RECENT MEASURES TAKEN BY U.S.: Many countries, despite voting in favor of the resolution, commended the United States for easing certain restrictions. India remarked that it is "encouraged by the steps announced by the current U.S. administration earlier this year to reduce restrictions on travel and remittances to Cuba by Cuban-Americans and on U.S. telecommunications services." Mexico commented on recent U.S. steps, remarking that "these measures contribute to improve the prevailing ambience." Tanzania noted that the family reunification program "is a positive trend and a bit of the beginning of the end." Libya added that the measures are "a reason for optimism." Norway, Benin and Ghana were among others signaling optimism over steps taken by the U.S. and the direction of the country's leadership.

18. (U) AMBASSADOR RICE DELIVERS REMARKS FOR U.S. DELEGATION: Ambassador Rice delivered the U.S. explanation of vote, reminding the audience that the Obama Administration has taken clear steps aimed at supporting the desire of Cubans to "freely determine their country's future" and noted the

restrictions lifted to facilitate the flow of humanitarian items, remittances, family visits, extend the flow of telecommunications services, and permit and re-establish direct mail service. Ambassador Rice addressed the Cuban allegations of genocide, noting that this is a distortion which "diminishes the real suffering of victims of genocide elsewhere in the world." She rebutted claims by Cuba that the U.S. is responsible for suffering among the Cubans, instead pointing out that the "U.S. is a major source of humanitarian assistance to the Cuban people." Ambassador Rice urged Cuba to release prisoners of conscience, ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, reduce charges on remittances, and allow greater freedom of speech. Finally she promised that the U.S. would continue to find ways to expand opportunities for Cubans and to work with the Cuban government on "issues of mutual concern and national security." Full text of the remarks can be found at <http://www.usun.state.gov/briefing/statements /2009/131014.htm>.

19. (U) CUBA REPLIES TO SWEDEN, NORWAY, AND U.S.

INTERVENTIONS: Cuba replied to comments made by Sweden (on behalf of the E.U.), Norway, and the U.S., directing most comments to Ambassador Rice, pointing out that it "respects her opinions" and "recognizes that her career is different than the neo-conservatives such as Bolton," and therefore regretted that she is following the same line of reasoning as her predecessors. Cuba contended that its country is in fact "closer to Lincoln's democracy than the plutocracy of the rich" and called on the U.S. to release the five Cuban "anti-terrorists" held in U.S. prisons. Cuba again defended the legal grounds for using the word genocide (citing the Geneva Conventions). Despite all its rhetoric to the contrary, Cuba admitted that with respect to the United States, "there have been some steps in the right direction," but added "they do not signify any progress in lifting the blockade." Cuba cited Ambassador Rice's recent speech at NYU in which she embraced cooperation and the consideration of new ideas and claimed to be "surprised that Ambassador Rice had to say the opposite this morning."

Rice